

NCI's Commitment to Reducing Cancer Health Disparities

Research initiatives at NCI are conducted under five extramural and two intramural divisions, all of which are under the leadership of the Office of the Director. The extramural Divisions of Cancer Biology, Cancer Control and Population Sciences, Cancer Prevention, Cancer Treatment and Diagnosis, and Extramural Activities coordinate grant-funded research projects carried out in academic centers, other government

agencies, and the private sector. Intramural research is conducted under the auspices of the Center for Cancer Research and the Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics.

The two NCI organizations most focused on the work of reducing cancer health disparities are the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities and the Comprehensive Minority Biomedical Branch, both of which are located in the Office of the Director at the top of NCI's organizational chart and under Dr. von Eschenbach's leadership.



NCI Profile

J. Fernando Arena, M.D., Ph.D.

Program Director
Clinical and Genetic Epidemiology Research Branch
Division of Cancer Control and Population Sciences

Dr. Arena received both his medical and doctoral degrees from the University of Campinas, São Paulo, Brazil. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship in medical genetics at the University of Washington School of Medicine and another at the University of Miami School of Medicine. Dr. Arena is a Founding Fellow of the American College of Medical Genetics, a member of the American Society of Human Genetics, and Vice President of the Iberoamerican Society of Human Genetics. His present research is centered in the field of cancer genetics. Dr. Arena joined NCI in July, 2003.

Black Bag: What got you interested in research?

Dr. Arena: I always liked research, but didn't know exactly how to pursue a career in it. When I was a medical geneticist in 1974 in Brazil almost nobody knew what "genetics" was at that time or

what I did. Then I had the great fortune to be accepted for a fellowship program in medical genetics at the University of Washington, where I spent two

"When I was offered the opportunity to come to NCI last year, it was a dream come true. It allows me to continue my work with health disparities and underserved populations, especially Latin American and African American populations . . . I'm thrilled to do something about disparities in cancer incidence and mortality."

years with some of the best geneticists in the country at that time. That experience gave me the direction I needed.

Black Bag: And what is your new job at NCI?

Dr. Arena: As a program director at NCI, my job has two compo-

nents: the first is to provide programmatic and scientific assistance to the grantees in my portfolio and the second is to provide leadership and coordination in medical and scientific fields. Basically, you are free to think how you can contribute to move cancer research forward by formulating ideas that may become new concepts that generate future investigations. This is a lot of fun. You are only limited by your own creativity and ability to think. It's a great—and very supportive—environment to work in. I'm very excited that I get to work with my heart and my brain.

Black Bag: What would you say to a reader who was thinking of pursuing a career in cancer research?

Dr. Arena: I think that the research field is wonderful. It's tough, but it's a privilege to create new knowledge. Also, it's incredibly important for minorities to get involved in research